



Biological weapons threat leads to inoculations for sailors

Although the threat posed by biological weapons such as anthrax is deemed low, Canadian military personnel serving in the Arabian Gulf are being protected against anthrax through an immunization program involving 6 inoculations over 18 months. The anthrax vaccine does not provide full protection with the first shot; further needles are required at 14 and 28 days, and these are followed by booster shots 6, 12 and 18 months later. The vaccine takes full effect about 28 days after the initial inoculation; until that time, sailors also receive doxycycline.

Master Corporal Steve Roy photo



Lieutenant-Commander Heather MacKinnon, a physician, talks to crew members from the HMCS *Toronto* prior to their inoculation

"The best cure for anthrax is prevention," said Lieutenant-Commander Heather MacKinnon, the physician aboard the frigate HMCS *Toronto*. MacKinnon, a 1988 Dalhousie graduate, says inoculation and

the doxycycline provides ample protection for the ship's 239 crew members, although "they may be required to recommence taking the antibiotic if the threat increases." [One military airman, who was not from the *Toronto*,

refused to be inoculated. He was flown back to Canada, where he will likely face disciplinary measures. — Ed.]

The ship has been in the Gulf since early March as part of a multinational operation to pressure Iraq into allowing UN inspectors to carry out their procedures. Since then, MacKinnon and her 2 medical assistants have also been inoculating the crew against common diseases found in the Middle East. They have also provided advice to the ship's diving team and established links with medical officers from other navies operating in the area. As well, they have been educating

crew members about the need to protect themselves from the sun's rays while working on the *Toronto's* upper decks. The ship is scheduled to return to Halifax this spring. — Lieutenant (N) *Jacques Fauteux*

Emergency medicine's reach expands

More than 2000 delegates from 34 countries attended the International Conference on Emergency Medicine in Vancouver in March, the second time the huge meeting has been held in Canada. One highlight was the presence of physicians from several developing countries, including Nepal. The Vancouver meeting attracted the most physicians in the conference's 14-year history. The

Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians was formed 20 years ago, and this country is considered a world leader in the field.

Dr. Kendall Ho, a Vancouver emergency physician and conference cochair, said organizers of emergency medicine meetings face special demands. For instance, because the field attracts many young physicians organizers provided day-care facilities

during the Mar. 25–29 convention. Most of the specialty's oldest members are now in their mid-50s, said Ho, although he knows of a 70-year-old who still practises emergency medicine. He said the problem of burnout for older emergency doctors "is an issue" in the rapidly changing field.

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